

**MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY FORM**

NR Eligible: yes ☐
no ☒

Property Name: Bird River Road Neighborhood Inventory Number: BA-3169
Address: Bird River Road Historic district: yes ☒ no
City: Baltimore Zip Code: 21220 County: Baltimore County
USGS Quadrangle(s): Middle River
Property Owner: Multiple Owners Tax Account ID Number: multiple
Tax Map Parcel Number(s): multiple Tax Map Number: 82
Project: Campbell Boulevard Extension Agency: Baltimore County Government
Agency Prepared By: A.D. Marble & Company
Preparer's Name: Stephanie Foell Date Prepared: 5/14/2004
Documentation is presented in: _____
Preparer's Eligibility Recommendation: Eligibility recommended ☒ Eligibility not recommended
Criteria: A B C D Considerations: A B C D E F G
Complete if the property is a contributing or non-contributing resource to a NR district/property:
Name of the District/Property: _____
Inventory Number: _____ Eligible: yes Listed: yes
Site visit by MHT Staff yes ☒ no Name: _____ Date: _____

Description of Property and Justification: *(Please attach map and photo)*

Architectural Description

The residences of the Bird River Road neighborhood span several decades of residential development in the Middle River area. Most of the residences are heavily altered.

The earliest buildings, located at 9909, 9921, and 9942 Bird River Road, were constructed in the 1920s and 30s and are one-and-one-half or two story bungalows. While the basic forms of the buildings, such as front-facing gables, are intact, all have been sided in vinyl or asbestos. Replacement windows are also prevalent and are generally one-over-one, double-hung sash configurations.

Minimal Traditional residences were constructed on Bird River Road in the 1940s. Today, these residences also retain the basic configurations of the building type. They display little or no eave overhang and have side-gable roofs. Examples can be found at 9939, 9940, and 9944 Bird River Road. However, all have been clad in vinyl siding. Based on observations of similar houses in the area, it seems likely that these buildings were originally clad in brick.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST REVIEW

Eligibility recommended ☐ Eligibility not recommended ☒
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MHT Comments:

Jim Tullman ✓
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services

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Reviewer, National Register Program

6/30/04
Date

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Date

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BA-3169

Bird River Road Neighborhood

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In the 1950s, two Ranch houses were constructed in the neighborhood. These houses are typical examples of the Ranch form and have pronounced horizontality. Bay or picture windows are also common. One is clad in bricks and the other in asbestos siding. Examples are located at 9913 and 9917 Bird River Road.

History/Significance

General Regional History

The Bird River Road neighborhood group is located in eastern Baltimore County in the Middle River neighborhood. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, much of the area developed as a result of its proximity to Philadelphia Road, a major thoroughfare within the region. From the early years of settlement into the twentieth century, much of the land of this portion of Baltimore County was involved in small-scale farming. After World War II, the growing suburbanization of the Baltimore region reached Middle River and much of the farmland was subdivided into smaller lots. Many post-War neighborhoods containing small residences are concentrated in this part of Baltimore County.

Philadelphia Road

The area of Baltimore County that is now Rosedale developed largely as a result of its proximity to Philadelphia Road/Maryland Route 7, a road that originated as a Native American trail (Brooks and Rockel 1979:134). In 1729, the City of Baltimore was platted as a future port and commerce center. During that time, surveyors laid out the Philadelphia Road, linking Philadelphia, the New World's largest port city, with points south and west, including Baltimore.

The roadway's importance grew over time as interstate commerce became more prevalent. By the 1740s, commercial thoroughfares were being constructed to move farm produce, mill products, lime, and iron castings to the port city of Baltimore, and taverns and hotels sprang up along the Philadelphia Road. In 1814, after several attempts to establish a turnpike, the Baltimore and Havre de Grace Turnpike Company received a charter to construct a toll road on the bed of the Philadelphia Road. The turnpike company initially enjoyed a period of prosperity. However, after only 20 years, railroads began offering intense competition (Hollifield 1978:81-82).

As Baltimore continued its expansion eastward, portions of the turnpike were ceded to the city. In 1888, Harford County assumed control of the turnpike contained within its boundaries. The end of the turnpike came in 1894, when Baltimore County assumed control of the remaining roadway within its jurisdiction.

During the twentieth century, traffic continued to increase on Philadelphia Road, particularly when automobiles became prevalent. Businesses arose along the former turnpike to serve the traveling public, and many thought the road would continue to be the favored route for those traveling between Philadelphia and points south. However, in the late 1930s, the state held discussions regarding Works Progress Administration funds available for highway construction. A decision was made either to improve the existing Philadelphia Road, by then designated as Maryland Route 7, or construct a new roadway parallel to the old one. The businesses along the existing route fought to retain their source of business, but constructing a new, parallel road became the final decision, and work commenced on the new road, the Pulaski Highway, which eventually replaced Philadelphia Road as the primary thoroughfare through the area.

Agricultural Development in Eastern Baltimore County

European settlement of eastern Baltimore County likely began circa 1660. Because of the costly and complex land grant process, many wealthy landowners purchased parcels of land in Baltimore County, viewing these holdings as either investments in the future or potential bequests for heirs. Even land that had been purchased remained vacant (Marks 2000:7).

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Consequently, during the early eighteenth century, land patterns consisted of small settlements, trails, and wilderness. Small-scale farmers, woodcutters, and miners were the primary residents, not the structured society of the southern Maryland gentry. This trend continued into later centuries as farmers continued to cultivate smaller plots of land than their Southern, plantation-owning counterparts (Marks 2000:11).

Middle River was originally part of an agricultural region. Generally, farms were small in size and produced relatively minor amounts of what were known as "stoop crops," vegetables which required bending over to harvest. These included carrots, parsnips, beans, etc. These crops were either sold at markets throughout Baltimore City (usually the Belair Market, the closest to the area) or by the farmers themselves, a practice known as truck farming which was prevalent throughout the area. Also at this time, as greenhouses came into widespread use, this area of Baltimore County became an important center for the production of year-round cut flowers for weddings, funerals, and bouquets (McGrain 1990:17).

Suburban Growth

Substantial suburban growth would not come to Middle River until the 1940s and 1950s. Following World War II, there was a housing shortage in the Baltimore area, and developers purchased many farms for housing developments. Returning war veterans took advantage of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, commonly called the G.I. Bill of Rights, which provided guarantees on home mortgages. Furthermore, Americans' growing reliance on the automobile allowed a massive residential shift away from Baltimore to the suburbs. This change is particularly evident in portions of Rosedale, where new streets were laid out and small Minimal Traditional-style residences, common in the post-War years, are plentiful. Residential growth in this locality began in the 1950s and continued steadily over the following decades, with 75 percent of the 1990 extant housing units constructed between 1950 and 1979.

The Bird River Road neighborhood group is an example of an unplanned suburban neighborhood, a "cluster of buildings not conceived as a planned neighborhood or planned development and . . . built within a wide date range (Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology n.d.:b)." Unplanned neighborhoods in Maryland often developed along major transportation routes such as Philadelphia Road/Maryland Route 7, with buildings first occurring along the main route and later expanding onto new streets.

The earliest houses within the Bird River Road neighborhood grouping are simple cottages, now heavily altered, which were constructed in the 1940s. Following this earliest period of construction, Minimal Traditional and Ranch houses appeared in the 1950s. In addition to the alterations to the earliest buildings, subsequent construction in the 1960s and 70s greatly obscures the remaining historic character of the neighborhood.

Cape Cod and Minimal Traditional residences (which are not distinguished from each other by some scholars) are the consequence of the dire need for small residences in the years at the end of and directly following World War II. Quick, efficient, and affordable construction was of paramount importance, and the resulting houses display little architectural ornamentation. Commonly one or one-and one-half stories, roofs are gabled and the eaves are usually close to the building (McAlester and McAlester 1984:477-478).

This broad range of construction dates gives the neighborhood a somewhat incoherent appearance, although all of the residences are of similar size and scale.

Beyond the boundaries of the current area of potential effect/study area, the greater Middle River area displays a similar lack of coherence, with turn-of-the century farmhouses intermingled with early-twentieth century bungalows and a strong majority of post-War Cape Cod and Minimal Traditional houses.

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Date

Determination of Eligibility

The Bird River Road neighborhood grouping is a collection of primarily mid-twentieth century, residences. Modest in scale, these buildings, most notably those from the earliest periods of construction, have undergone substantial alterations to their original building materials.

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. that are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- C. that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. that have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

The Bird River Road neighborhood grouping is not eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Under Criterion A, it is not associated with any significant events that impacted the broad patterns of American history. Although a small subset of neighborhoods have a strong historic association with suburbanization trends and/or impacted later neighborhoods, the Bird River Road grouping does not have these important associations which would make it eligible under Criterion A. Similarly, research did not uncover any associations with prominent persons which would make the grouping eligible under Criterion B.

The Bird River Road neighborhood grouping is not eligible under Criterion C as an example of an unplanned suburban neighborhood. According to Suburbanization Historic Context and Survey Methodology, for an unplanned neighborhood to be eligible under Criterion C, it must possess an exceptionally high level of integrity of materials, design of individual properties, feeling, and setting to represent a direct association with the suburban movement. Most of the residences in the Bird River Road grouping retain little architectural integrity due, in large part, to alterations in building materials and fenestration. No properties within the Bird River Road grouping are individually eligible for the National Register. The neighborhood was not evaluated under Criterion D.

Key References

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2000 The History of Perry Hall, Maryland. Gateway Press, Inc., Baltimore, Maryland.

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USGS

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9909 Bird River Road (BA-3169)



9913 Bird River Road (BA-3169)



9917 Bird River Road (BA-3169)



9921 Bird River Road (BA-3169)



9939 Bird River Road (BA-3169)



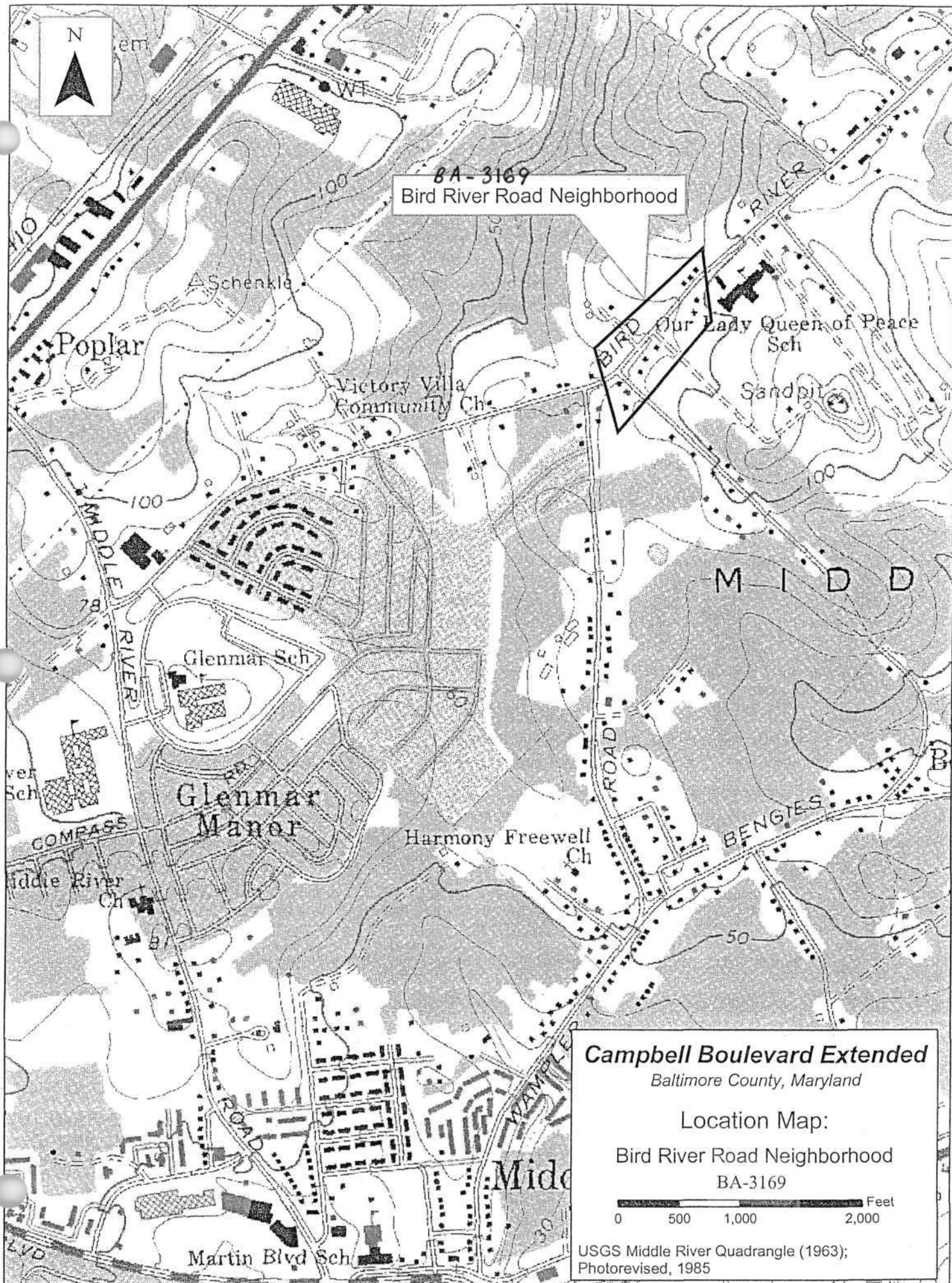
9940 Bird River Road (BA-3169)



9942 Bird River Road (BA-3169)



9944 Bird River Road (BA-3169)





BA-3169

Bird River Road Neighborhood
Baltimore County, MD

SFoell

11/2004

MD SHPO

Bird River Road streetscape;
view to the NE

1/6

ART-2611 <No. 6A>007
684 7817 -1 N N-4-24 (042)0



BA - 3169

9913 Bird River Rd. - Bird River Rd. Neighborhood

Baltimore County, MD

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MD SHPD

View to the SE

2/6

ART-2611 <No. 0A>001
684 7817 -1 N-N-6 04 (042)0



BA-3169

9921 Bird River Rd - Bird River Rd.

Neighborhood

Baltimore County, MD

S Foell

11/2004

MD SHPD

View to the SE

3/6

ART-2611 <No. 3A>004
684 7817 -1 N N-6-12 <042>@



BA-3169

9931 Bird River Road - Bird River Road

Neighborhood

Baltimore County, MD

SFoell

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MD SHPO

View to the east

4/6

ART-2611 <No. 5A>006
684 7817 -1 N N-3-01 (042)0



BA-3169

9939 Bird River Road - Bird River Road
Neighborhood

Baltimore County, MD

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11/2004

MD SHPO

View to the SE

5/6

ART-2611 <No. BA>009
684 7817 -1 N N-6 12 <042>0



BA - 3169

9940 + 9942 Bird River Road - Bird River
Road Neighborhood

Baltimore County, MD

S Foell

11/2004

MD SHPO

View to the NE

6/6

ART-2611 <No. 9A>010
684 7817 -1.N.N-4 34 (042)0